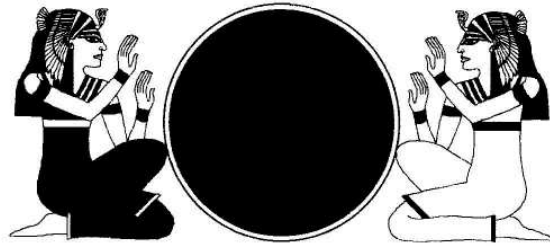


Temple of the Dark Moon



Freyja: Northern Love Goddess

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The Goddess I thought I would write about this month comes from the Scandinavian countries, the land of the Vikings and formidable warriors. It is little then that she too is a figure of power to whom not only women honoured, but also kings and heroes. She, of course, is Freyja.

While her name is said to mean "Lady", one should not assume that Freyja resembles a fragile waif from a Jane Austin novel – quite to opposite in fact. Being the chief Goddess of the Vanir (a group of deities associated with the Earth and sea as opposed the Aesir, the Gods of the sky), Freyja not only is the Goddess of love, beauty and fertility, but she is also identified as being the Goddess of battle and death. It is from her that we get the name for the sixth day of the week, Friday – meaning "Freyj'a Day".

According to Norse myth, Freyja is the daughter of Njord, the God of the sea and ships, and twin sister to Freyr, who is also associated with fertility. She resides in the celestial realm of Falkvang, where it was her privilege to receive half of all the warriors slain in battle and take their souls to her hall, *Sessrumnir*. The God Odin received the other half into Valhalla.

Described as being blonde, blue-eyed and most beautiful, Freyja more often than not associated with erotic love, sensuality and passion. She was reputed to have granted her

sexual favours freely to all the Gods as well as accepting Earthly rulers as her lovers, supporting them through their reigns and welcoming them after death. When Freya appeared draped in her feathered cloak and wearing nothing but her magick amber necklace, the Brisingamen, no one could resist her.

Freyja is associated with riches, weeping tears of pure gold when her husband Od was lost. To some sources, her wonderful necklace, Brisingamen (or the “Necklace of Brisings”) was an ancient symbol of the Great Goddess from much early times, which the Norse refer to as being the Milky Way. A later myths however (possibly the work of Christian storytellers) Freyja obtains her famous necklace by trading sexual favours with the four dwarfs who had fashioned it. According to this legend, the Norse trickster God, Loki, told Odin (the Norse main God) of this and was commanded to steal the necklace. Loki entered Freyja's bower in the form of a fly while she was asleep, and then became a flea and bit her on the cheek, causing her to turn over in bed so that he could undo the clasp and take the necklace away. When Freyja found it gone, she guessed that this was Odin's work and demanded that he give her the necklace back. Odin consented on condition that she brought about a war between two powerful kings, something, which he desired for his own purposes. The tale then leads on to one of the great heroic legends of the Viking age.

There are various female spirits that belong to the Vanir and Freyja is associated as being the leader of the spirits of the battle, the Valkyries. In literature from the Viking Age, the Valkyries were noble women on horseback, bearing spears. However, there is also a tradition of fearsome giantesses who appear in dreams as omens of approaching slaughter, pouring blood over the land, devouring men in battle, or riding on wolves accompanied by birds of prey. They are often represented as companions of ravens - birds which flock to the battlefield to feast on corpses. A different aspect of the Valkyries is their role as family guardian spirits; such beings befriend young princes, give them a name and a sword, became their supernatural brides, teach them warrior lore, protect them in battle, and welcome them into the burial mound at death.

The Thief of the Golden Apples

Freyja plays a small, yet significant, part in recovering the golden apples of immortality when they were stolen by a giant from their guardian, the Goddess Idun. According to the legend, one day when Odin, Loki and Hoenir were journeying together, they tried to roast an ox for

supper, but the meal would not cook properly. A great eagle (which was actually the giant Thiazi) perched on an oak above them and offered to help in return for a share of the meal. When the ox was finally roasted, the bird carried off a greater part of the meat. Loki in fury struck at him with a pole, but the eagle flew off with the pole fixed to his body and Loki still attached to the other end. Loki was dragged across the ground, and Thiazi would not free him until he swore that he would bring him the Goddess Idun and the golden apples of immortality.

When Loki reached Asgard (the realm of the Gods), he lured the Goddess with her golden apples out into the forest, on the pretext that he would show her apples even more beautiful than her own. Then the giant Thiazi in his eagle form, swooped down and bore her off to Jotunheim, the land of the giants.

Deprived of the apples, the Gods began to grow old and wrinkled, and when they discovered Loki's part in the theft, they threatened to kill him unless he brought Idun back. So Loki borrowed Freyja's falcon form and flew to Thiazi's hall, changed Idun into a nut, and flew off with her in his claws. Before long the giant pursued him in his eagle shape again, but as Loki flew into Asgard the Gods set light to a pile of wood shavings and Thiazi's wing was singed as he crossed the threshold in pursuit. He fell to the ground and the Gods slew him, and thus the precious apples remained in Asgard, continuing to ensure eternal youth for the Gods.

About the Author:

Frances first connected with the Divine Feminine in the late 1980s. This connection was strengthened in 1993 when during a Wiccan rite known as "Drawing Down the Moon" the great Egyptian Goddess Isis made her presence felt.

Since that time Frances has continued to strengthen her personal relationship with the Divine Feminine - the Ancient Matriarch - the Goddess. Now Frances is drawn to share her knowledge and experience with others in order to assist them to re-connect with this ancient, yet powerful force.

Since 2002 Frances has been regularly writing for Australia's No.1 spiritual lifestyle magazine, "Insight", and her articles have appeared in over 10 separate publications around the world, including "SageWoman" and the 2008 Llewellyn "Witches" calendar. She has also appeared in the "Sunday Mail", the "Messenger" and the "Melbourne Age".

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